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SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

¶1. This cable reports on a relevant opinion piece from NepalQs non-English press.

¶2. Maoist-leaning vernacular tabloid daily, Naya Patrika (with circulation of 30,000), ran an editorial with the title "ObamaQs foreign policy", which starts with Nepali New Year greetings issued on Tuesday by the Secretary of State and states that there are indications of some change in American foreign policy. Full text translation:

¶3. "American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has sent New Year greetings to Nepalis all over the world. This is the first time in the 60-year-long history of America-Nepal relations that any Secretary of State has sent greeting to Nepalis. On the one hand it might be an indication that Nepal is getting more importance in world diplomacy, and on the other, it supports the assumption that American President Barack Obama is trying to gradually redefine AmericaQs world relations.

¶4. Recently, America has relaxed some of its sanctions against Cuba. Now Cubans residing in America can send some of their incomes to their relatives in Cuba and can visit Cuba. Similarly, American media organizations can invest in Cuba. With the latest change, Obama has hinted towards the possibility of dialogue with Cuba.

¶5. ObamaQs foreign policy seems to be focused on changing the attitude towards America, which is negative around the world. Immediately after becoming the president, he proposed better relations with Iran. He has also hinted at pressing Israel in favor of Palestine. It was assumed that Hillary Clinton put Indonesia in the list of her first foreign visits, in order to improve relations with the Muslim world. The importance shown by Clinton towards China during her first foreign visit and ObamaQs meeting with Chinese foreign minister at the Oval Office shows that America wants to work in cooperation with China at the time of world financial crisis. There are also signs that the relation with Russia, almost destroyed during BushQs term, would be improved in ObamaQs term.

¶6. Considering the above developments, the New Year greetings to Nepal indicate that America is considering NepalQs geopolitical importance vis-à-vis its relation with South Asia and China. On the other hand, AmericaQs such attention during the historic transition when the Maoist is leading the government, indicates that it is not worried whoever is in power so long as Nepal moves forward along a democratic path. In this situation, only time can show whether or not Obama becomes successful in improving the image of his country."

POWELL